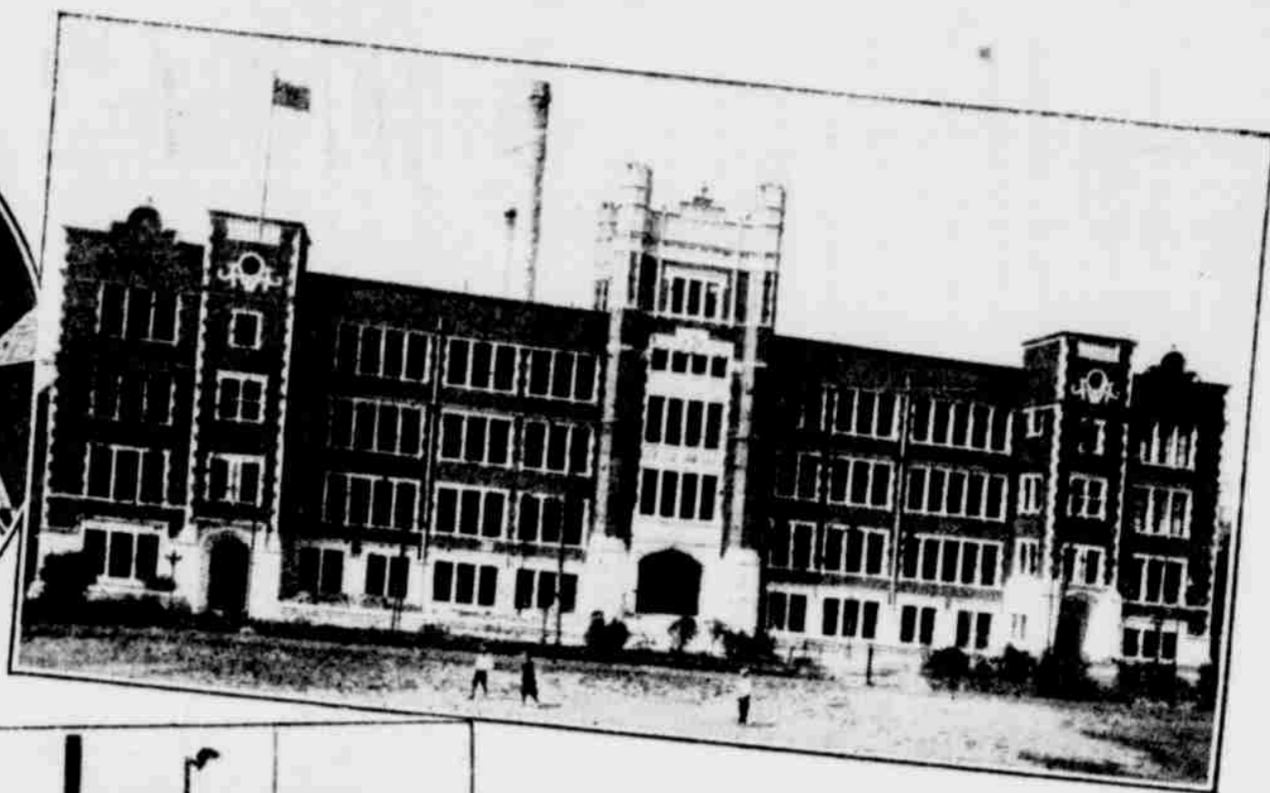


# The Passing of the Little Red Schoolhouse



Top left—Experimental school garden.  
Top right—Modern high school (Stivers H. S., Dayton, Ohio.)  
Lower—Girls being taught cooking, sewing and household duties at an early age.

By HOWARD EGBERT

IF IT be true, as many have contended and as few will deny, that education is the basic principle of democracy, then there is manifest reason why educational institutions in the United States should continue to make progress. Happily they have been headed forward for the last few decades. Intolerable wages for instructors, severe as this has proven to be as a handicap to development, will not succeed in retarding the movement, nor will circumstances associated with radical teachings which have entered in great measure to make more difficult the necessary procession of enlightened boys and girls.

The little red schoolhouse is a thing of the past. Here and there about America will be found these landmarks of another era. They were serviceable in their generation, and out from the four brick walls and uncomfortable environment have gone forth men and women to conquer ignorance, master science and win the battles of social and economic demands of the country.

Men formerly prided themselves that they learned the three R's to the tune of a hickory stick. Parents take delight in recounting to their offspring the stories of long walks up hill and down, over muddy or dusty roads or, as sometimes was necessary in winter, through great banks of snow, in order that they might receive the God-given privilege of being educated. But the little red schoolhouse is relegated to the rear. Its place in the history of America is secure, but its usefulness is at end, for the last decade has seen the rise and wide distribution of the centralized schoolhouse, where everything from home baking to cabinet making is taught by experienced instructors.

The little red schoolhouse represented an age of thoroughness, no less than the present age represents a period of specialization. Men and women had to have some kind of an education in the early days, because the principles of free government were based upon education. But the honest farmer who in boyhood days had to work and study as best he could was resolved that succeeding generations should be spared the difficulties and privations of the uncomfortable era in American education. The modern high school, the distinct and incomparable public school, and the great college and university have answered the call of our elders for something more enduring, more modern and in every way more serviceable than the little old red schoolhouse possibly could furnish to boys and girls of tender years.

It is a particularly pleasing feature of life in America that young people who desire an education generally get one. There is no country on the face of the earth where so great a premium is placed upon education as in the United States. The Old World countries may boast of their traditions running back into the musty, romantic centuries that have fled; but it has remained for America to point the way to universal, popular education. The little red schoolhouse in the forest or atop some neighboring hill in the countryside was the beginning of America's greatness. The modern school building, with its efficiency and largeness of vision, is carrying on the work where the old-fashioned schoolmaster with his patched trousers or his simple dress laid it down when he passed on to another world.

The modern school, whether it be an institution where only the lower branches of learning are taught or an institution where the languages of the world are considered by the student, is distinctively American. It is the representative home of learning for American boys and girls. Its influence, moreover, extends beyond the limits of the classroom, because in every well-ordered high school of today sewing is taught and the domestic arts, and young girls are going to their homes after class hours filled with enthusiasm over their work and teaching the mothers and even the grandmothers some of the newer ideas of making housework easy and thorough.

This, too, generally is regarded by those who are not conversant with facts as an era of frills and fads. The other day a young man went home from his manual training class with a new clock he had made. The family had been using an old-fashioned timepiece that seldom graced the living-room mantle. Everybody was ashamed of its appearance. But the boy had learned how to develop his artistic temperament and when he took that old-fashioned clock and put it into the new frame he had built at his high school he astonished his family, and at the same time reaped the benefit of knowledge that he really was learning to do something worth while.

One feature of the modern school is its extensive

playground and recreation center. The little red schoolhouse had a sandy play-yard with sticks, stones and what not. It was a limited area in which to enjoy outdoor life. Today your school playgrounds have all manner of parallel bars, swimming pools, baseball diamonds and a variety of attractions which give opportunities without number to young men and young women, fresh from their studies, to enjoy a relaxation hour. The grandmothers and grandfathers will marvel at the exterior decorations of the modern school, vine-clad and planted with flowers and shrubbery. But this is an age of progress and must be met with modern thought in scholastic development.

The day of the three R's is not to be underestimated. But manifestly it cannot be compared with the day of printing, painting, manual training, domestic science, nursing, salesmanship, public speaking, news-writing, piano tuning, instrumental music instruction and the like which the new and modern school affords to the millions of students who are in attendance upon its sessions.

In many cities a course in municipal training has been added to the study of the schools. Business men and city officials are regular visitors at the classrooms and invite questions and deliver talks upon national, state and community subjects. In this way boys and girls are growing to know more and love more the things which pertain to the development of their own home town. The little red schoolhouse manifestly never thought of these things as comparable with education of the early days.

In Xenia, Ohio, for an example, and also in Zanesville, Ohio, students in the high schools elect members on the official boards of the Chambers of Commerce. Imagine, if you can, what vast privileges accrue from such a plan. In Dayton the commission-manager form of government employed in that municipality is exemplified through the organization by students of Parker High School of a regular governmental family. A mayor, city manager and other officials are elected, and also a police court where the fundamental principles of law and order are taught to young people by city attorneys and municipal officials.

One community in Ohio permits the teachers to select the textbooks which are to be used in the classrooms, instead of allowing representatives of publishing houses to dictate to the board of education the type and character of study books.

Perhaps in no better way are children of modern America being taught the advantages of good citizenship than through systematic courses on this subject being taught by men and women who understand what is most needed to develop a race of thorough Americans. Public speaking also is a part of the classroom study in many institutions in the United States.

One city in the Middle West has stock-judging classes for the young men who come from the agricultural sections in the neighborhood. Too much can be said in defense of this course, and he would be an idle gossip who would undertake to defame a system which gives to the younger boys of the farm some of the essential principles which these young men in

later years will find important in their professional lives as tillers of the soil.

The school garden has become a popular feature of the present day educational system. More than ten million dollars' worth of serviceable foodstuffs was raised in three states through a development of school gardens during the last year of the war. And the lessons thus learned never were forgotten. In these school gardens were produced eatables and specimens for floral study.

The finer habits of thrift are being taught in thousands of American schools through the banking systems instigated and fostered by teachers and school boards. Young people, even as young as six and seven years, are saving their pennies daily and owning their own bank books. It does not require a ouija board to show how instruction of this kind is bound to make its influence felt in the succeeding years.

The central high school in the rural districts has given to these sections of the country new inspirations and incentives for living. There is hardly a well-ordered community in the United States today that has not its rural high school where community entertainments are held and current events discussed every week, winter and summer alike. These centers have contributed in large measure to the relief of farm drudgery, and have built up a social system in agricultural parts of the various states that is of incalculable worth.

The motion picture machine has become a part of the modern school. Here during the winter evenings municipal sectional meetings are held and problems pertaining to civic development are threshed out. The "movies" provide a period of entertainment which is appreciated by the thousands who gather every week here and there.

More and more the tendency has been to eliminate worthless studies from the classroom. Millions of school children represent many and distinct mental thoughts. Here is a boy who will make a good mechanic if given proper training. The manual training department offers him just this chance to improve his art. He is taught to make a variety of useful articles. If his mind turns toward mechanical matters, there is the electrically driven blacksmith's forge in the high school basement, where he can pound the shapeless mass of iron into useful articles for the home or the school.

The girl may want to learn how to make her own dresses, or cook. Here the domestic science classrooms come forward and offer her the use of a well-regulated kitchen with ample and adequate instruction.

There is a boy who likes horticulture. In many classrooms today the subject is discussed and demonstrations are given to yield to the young man in short trousers some of the knowledge he may use a little later with profit to himself. Wireless telegraphy is being taught almost everywhere now. Music has come into its own in a definite way in the modern school. Instrumental and vocal lessons are a part of the classroom study. The child who has an artistic eye and a sense of artistry has the paint and easel to work with in the development of that finer sense.

Perhaps there is no one feature of modern school life which meets so adequately the urgent demand of the times as the school cafeteria and the gymnasium.

The surprising thing about the modern American school is that it leaves so little time for idleness on the part of the scholar. While there are study periods, interspersed between lectures, practically all the available time, from the time school begins until it closes, is spent in doing something useful and practical.

Men and women of advanced years sit down sometimes and sigh for the "good old days." The little red schoolhouse with its hard back seats, its great coal stove in the corner, the sharp, vigilant eye of the schoolmaster (and, truth to tell, he is one of the pioneers in the development of a well organized nation) is passing away. It was one of the traditional features of the "good old days." And yet there is not a father or mother in all this broad land who would want children to be subjected to the rigors of winter, or the wearisome walks of several miles to the schoolhouse, as they were a half century ago.

The modern school is the bulwark of America's strength. It is the one compelling agency which stands out as a sure cure against radicalism in the future years. Out of its hives of industry a new generation is moving into the world of action and promise.

The modern school represents the highest accomplishment thus far attained in the development of the country. It is a great manufacturing center, where production always is keeping up with the demand.